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Appl. No. 10/539,895
Reply to Office Action of January 19, 2010
Attorney Docket 18064**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims:

1. (currently amended) In a road grader having a rear frame including left and right longitudinal beams, each having a rear end, and providing for the components or subassemblies of a rear counterweight, lights and a bumper, the improvement comprising:

the bumper and the rear counterweight having a first and second configuration and comprised of a first or a second generally flat elongate rear end plate having opposing outer end regions and extending across the entire width of the grader;

in a first configuration the first rear end plate exhibits a small wall thickness and is connected to the grader in combination with a rear-mounted piece of equipment of a high weight and in a second configuration the second rear end plate exhibits a greater wall thickness than the wall thickness of the first rear end plate and is connected to the grader in combination with a rear-mounted piece of equipment of a lower weight than the piece of equipment of the first configuration or without any rear-mounted equipment;

the rear end plates ~~plate~~ viewed in the direction of travel of the grader constitutes the rearmost part of the rear frame [[:]] and are removably attached to the rear transverse beam; the first and second rear end plates having similar opposing outer end portions and openings through the outer end portions and backup/brake

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and flasher lights are fitted therein such that the lights do not extend beyond the end of the frame; and

wherein in both configurations the rear end plate are similarly mounted directly above the piece of equipment of high or low weight, attached to the frame, such that an axle load distribution of the grader is generally maintained between the first and second configurations.

2. (original) The improvement of claim 1, wherein:
the rear end plate is formed as one piece.

3.-4. (canceled)

5. (original) The improvement of claim 1, wherein:
the rear ends of the left longitudinal beam and the right longitudinal beam are joined to a rear transverse beam.

6.-7. (canceled)

8. (currently amended) A road grader comprising:
a wheel-supported main frame having a front end and an opposing rear end as determined by the normal direction of travel, the main frame comprised of joined front and rear frames;

an engine and a driver's cab supported on said main frame;

a vertically adjustable ground-engaging blade supported by said main frame;

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the rear frame having left and right longitudinal beams generally parallel and in the general same horizontal plane, each with a rear end;

a generally flat elongate first rear end plate jointed to the rear end of each of the right and left longitudinal beams; the first rear end plate constituting the rearmost part of the rear frame and extending generally the width of the road grader;

a first rear mounted piece of ground engaging equipment is mounted to the rear frame directly below the first rear end plate; the first rear end plate having openings therethrough along a bottom edge of the plate to allow rear-mounted equipment to pass from a position below the first rear end plate through a lower portion of the first rear end plate; and

the grader having a first and second counterweight configuration, in the first configuration the first rear end plate has a first weight and attached to the grader in combination with the first rear-mounted piece of equipment of a high weight and the second configuration wherein the rear end plate is replaced by a second end plate that exhibits a greater weight than the first rear end plate and is attached to the grader in combination with a second rear-mounted piece of equipment of a lower weight than the first rear-mounted equipment or without any rear-mounted equipment such that an axle load distribution is generally maintained between the first and second configuration, wherein both the first and second rear end plates have similar opposing outer end portions and openings through the outer end portions such that backup/brake and flasher lights can extend through, wherein the lights do not extend beyond the openings in the end plates.

9. (original) The road grader of claim 8, wherein:

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the rear end plate is formed as one piece.

10.-11. (canceled)

12. (currently amended) The road grader of claim [[11]] 8, wherein:
the rear end plate is made of heavy gauge steel.

13. (canceled)

14. (currently amended) A method for maintaining an improved axle load distribution between front wheels and an axle of a road grader having a rear frame including left and right longitudinal beams, each having a rear end, a bumper and counterweight of the grader comprising a generally flat elongate end plate extending across the width of the grader and connected to the rear end of the longitudinal beams, the steps comprising:

removing a first rear end plate having a first weight and first wall thickness from an end of the grader;

attaching a rear mounted piece of equipment to the end of the grader; and

attaching a second end plate having a second weight less than the first weight and a second thickness less than the first wall thickness to the end of the grader

wherein the rear end plates viewed in the direction of travel of the grader constitutes the rearmost part of the rear frame and are removably attached to the grader; the first and second rear end plates having similar opposing outer end portions and openings through the outer end portions and backup/brake and flasher

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lights are fitted therein such that the lights do not extend beyond the end of the frame; and

wherein in both configurations the rear end plate are similarly mounted directly above the piece of equipment of high or low weight, attached to the frame, such that an axial load distribution of the grader is generally maintained between the first and second configurations.